This thesis is a study on how the Indian English writers Amitav Ghosh, Rohinton Mistry and Shashi Tharoor raise questions about self and history in their novels. These writers of the post-Rushdie times, who write in the contemporary world of globalization, represent the predicament of modern man going through a deep crisis in cultural confidence. They represent a new phase in Indian English literature that looks beyond writing back to the empire. Their novels that are postcolonial, historiographic and metafictional reconstruct history through myths and memories. The novels of these writers are analysed with a focus on the partial and plural identities of the subjects in hybrid spaces. The novels reiterate history to claim its multiplicity and thereby challenge the western concept of the conclusive nature of history. These novels, instead of transmitting any authoritative claim, contest the dominating versions of truth.

The imperial, colonial and postcolonial periods that witnessed large scale migrations led to interactions, interconnections and blending of myriad cultures that influenced the identity of the displaced subjects. Postcolonialism which aims at the process of decolonization involves a walk back to the past and a re-assertion of identity. The postcolonial literature centers on the suppressed other by interrogating the dominant culture and the established canon. The necessity to recover the self arises when one sees one's identity as being questioned. The concern about one's roots and origins in such a context is linked to questions of migrancy, diaspora and hybridity. The notion of identity as continually in a state of flux is asserted as the boundaries between the self and the other and between the different parts of the self are socially negotiated in relation to other factors like nationality, language, culture and history.

Postcolonialism calls for decolonization and asserts the need to retell the history of the marginalized. It demands the retelling of the past from the perspective of the other. The hybrid existence demands a return to the roots in a bid to reclaim the self. The rootless

migrant revisits the past in order to construct new meanings for his existence. The need to deconstruct, realign and interrogate colonial history develops with the endeavors to decolonize and seek representation. Revisiting the past means a recollection of stories, myths and legends that have stayed in the backyards of cultural memory as unwritten historical records of culture and tradition. The fiction writers utilize myths, memoirs, and memories to retell history, even as historians can be deemed to provide a somewhat fictionalized account of the story of the past using comparable devices. The blurring of the boundaries between history and novel, or fact and fiction introduces a mixture of fact and fantasy, of myth and reality, in the depiction of contemporary politics and history.

As a narrative representation of the past, one will have to contest western historiography's assumptions regarding history's conclusive nature. Historiographic metafiction attempts to use historical material within the parodic framework of fiction's self-reflexivity with a view to undermining the protocols of realism. The master narrative of history can be contested by the postcolonial novel either by placing the novel against history, or by dismantling the narrative, or by rewriting a tradition. Postmodernism problematises the objective nature of history. The need to problematize history and question its authenticity is expected to serve the multiple perspectives that one brings to bear upon it. The cultural and ideological orientation of the writer becomes a fundamental factor influencing his writing. A new perspective of the history of the repressed and muted is thus found in the writings where the author tries to retell the past of places and personages. Such novels challenge and contest the established conventions of writing through myths, oral tradition, digressive narrative techniques, and literary devices like satire, magic realism, irony and parody. The novels taken for study employ fragmented memories, myths, legends, letters, photographs and journals as multiple narrative media that counter documented history. Historiographic metafiction challenges and renders unstable any stable notion of historical knowledge. The conclusive

nature of western historiography is juxtaposed to the multiplicity of history that is presented through the retelling of history.

Indian writing in English has witnessed the emergence of writers who have problematised the stability and certainty of history and have acknowledged the existence of plural truths. Amitav Ghosh, Rohinton Mistry and Shashi Tharoor belong to the group of post-Rushdie Indian English writers whose novels are concerned with national politics and history. These writers make use of historiographic metafiction as a mode to retell history in fiction. The polyphony of voices represented in their novels presents multiple perspectives on history and establishes the need to have plural truths. The conventional rules of writing prescribed by colonial aesthetics and historiography are subverted by these writers who experiment with genres and narrative strategies. They portray multiple points of view and de-center any authoritative form of knowledge. The history-fiction interface with blurred borders is used to problematize the authenticity of history using parodic representations and self-reflexivity. The novels discussed in this study, instead of transmitting any authoritative claim, contest the very existence of dominating versions of truth.

While Amitav Ghosh explores the vicissitudes of human experience in different cultures with anthropological interest and attempts to retrieve the voices of those in the margins, Rohinton Mistry focuses on the issue of communal and ethnic identity with reference to the life of the Parsis. Shashi Tharoor revisits the past from the insider's point of view through a deployment of myths, legends and memories that he integrates into his fiction. The novels taken for study include Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason* (1986), *Shadow Lines* (1988), *In an Antique Land* (1992), *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1996), *The Glass Palace* (2000), *The Hungry Tide* (2004), *Sea of Poppies (2008),* and *River of Smoke* (2011), Mistry's collection of short stories, *Tales from Firozshah Baag* (1987) and his novels, *Such a Long*

Journey (1991), *A Fine Balance* (1995) and *Family Matters* (2002) and Tharoor's books of fiction, *The Great Indian Novel* (1989), *Show Business* (1991) and *The Riot* (2001).

The dissertation, in addition to the "Introduction" and the "Conclusion," is divided into four chapters. The introductory chapter discusses the theoretical formulations on the basis of which the novels are analyzed in the subsequent chapters. It discusses how post colonialism leads to a questioning of the received categories of history and how the narrative reconstruction of self and history becomes an important task of the writer.

The first chapter titled "In Search of the Self" delves into the notion of the self as a constantly altering entity. The selected writers present in their novels the ambiguity of hybrid existences, the dilemma of the rootless and unhomed migrants, the agony of the split between the self and the other and the crisis of identity. The postcolonial theme of the quest for the self is recognized as a persistent concern in the works of Ghosh, Mistry and Tharoor.

The second chapter, "Return to the Mythical Roots," deals with the use of myths as a ploy to narrate of history. In the novels taken for study the search for the self becomes a return to the culture's mythical roots. The revival of myths and the recapturing of traditional narrative methods which lead to a subversion of historiography is examined in this chapter.

"Retelling History," the third chapter, examines how the subjective interpretation of facts presents multiple perspectives on history. The analyses of the novels present memories and memoirs as narrative representations of counter histories and contest the grand narrative of history. In the novels of the selected authors, the rootless migrant revisits the past to acquire new meanings on their existence. The act of looking back into the past through fiction blurs the history-fiction interface and questions the objectivity of historiography.

The fourth chapter, "History as Metafiction," looks at the generic and narrative experiments of the writers and examines how they dispense with the borders between disciplines in their novels that are metafictional. Ghosh, Mistry and Tharoor resort to parodic

subversions and ironic representations to problematise the received notions of history and fiction. The multiplicity of history and the assertion of the existence of plural truths contest the notions of certainty and fixity connected with conventional historiography.

The concluding chapter sums up the arguments made in the core chapters and indicates how the novels taken for study exemplify a remarkable change in the sensibility of contemporary Indian English writing, which often combines aspects of postcolonialism with trends in postmodernism. The chapter also points to the ways in which Ghosh, Mistry and Tharoor suggest the upholding of the idea of plurality of truth as a necessary solution to the issues of representation that challenge the notions of self and history in today's world of multiculturalism.